

KAMP KANAWANA '73

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

CAMPING & OUTDOOR EDUCATION BRANCH

MONTREAL

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

KAMP KANAWANA DIRECTOR'S REPORT

TO AUGUST 5, 1973

It is not without sadness that I write this, my last report on Kamp Kanawana. To me, the summer of 1973 was the best one, in the three years I was involved, from the point of view of operation, program, staff, spirit in general and weather. My reasons for leaving the Association are in no way connected with Kanawana, it will always be near and dear to my heart.

Although registration was somewhat lower than last year it did pick up during the summer and the final figure, I understand, will not be nearly as bad as the June projections indicated. In spite of sound, professional opinions that the main reason for poor registration was late or inadequate promotion I still maintain that last summer's weather did not help and I am just as convinced that this summer's weather will help next year's registration. I don't mean by this that we shouldn't advertise early and adequately but that we can look forward to some "outside" help.

Recruitment and hiring of staff went well with a roughly 50% returnee rate. The only problem area at the opening of camp was the infirmary. The nurse we had hired was forced to withdraw her services due to a family problem which would have made her emotionally unable to cope with the job had we held her to her contract. We were fortunate in having the help of a fourth year medical student until July 1st and using Kathy MacLellan, last year's nursing assistant until the second period when Mrs. Leslie Bliss, R.N. (last year Associate Business Manager) came up to bail us out for the remainder of the summer. We had to release one girl counsellor during pre-camp as she was unqualified physically and emotionally for camp work and another after the first period for poor attitude and being A.W.O.L. overnight.

Four pre-pre-camp sessions were held in town with staff, dealing with organization, program and schedules, first aid, psychology and naturelore. For the latter three, specialists were recruited in the persons of Barry Burroughs, St. John's Ambulance Instructor, Dr. George Mager, Psychologist specializing in children and youth and Les Borzormeny, Biology Teacher from Lindsay Place High School. These sessions were not only informative but served to acquaint the staff with each other and to get them "together" before going up to camp. My thanks to the resource people, specially Barry Burroughs and George Mager who came free of charge.

During the actual pre-camp training at camp, emphasis was put on the activities that make up the camp program e.g. aquatics (including life-saving and A.R.), canoeing, sailing, camp craft, tripping, games (outdoor and indoor), arts and crafts, orienteering etc... A post pre-camp training evaluation questionnaire answered by the staff indicated that on the whole it was a valuable time which left them far more ready to handle their tasks once the campers arrived.

The only consistently negative feed-back on the questionnaire was concerning a session put on by the International Program Department wherein they played a simulation game, controlled by the resource people, called "Star Power". The session seemed to be totally irrelevant to our pre-camp training and only served to disrupt the unity which was forming amongst the staff. The brief talk given by Ross Bannerman was remembered as a high point of training camp, touching people's feelings and relating to the values of the camping experience and the impact it can make on both campers and staff. I believe everyone got something positive from it.

The design and co-ordination of program was excellently handled by Derek Walsh as was his supervision and operation of the camp in my absence. Derek had been a camper at Kanawana many years ago but was a newcomer on staff. In spite of this, his many years of experience in other camps in many capacities from camper, through C.I.T. to camp director plus his open personality made him well accepted by even the most senior of our staff. With his skills and experience he brought many new programs and games to camp which were very successful. It was a comfort to me, leaving camp early as I did, knowing he was there to carry-on. The many weeks of his own time he put in at the office and at home prior to camp were an enormous help in getting us off the ground in such good shape. My thanks to him.

The four Section Directors used in lieu of two S.D.s and four head Counsellors as last year was a much better system. It gave them less people to supervise thus permitting them to be more involved in program. They did a fine job, particularly the junior camp S.D.s Eva Menzak and Bob Fyfe.

Another outstanding area was the Hike and Trip Department. The contribution made by Perry Olshansky to this program has, in my opinion, pulled Kanawana back up to being one of the top camps in the country in terms of tripping, canoeing and camp craft. In his third year on staff (senior counsellor, section director, now Hike and Trip director) Perry was sent to the Canadian Canoe School, before camp, and obtained his Instructor's Certificate. The skills he learned there plus his own boundless energy and enthusiasm made his department the busiest in camp during the first half of the summer. He had everyone motivated, campers and staff alike, in taking his courses to upgrade their skills for out-tripping.

He developed corps of canoe instructors and camp craft instructors who were kept busy morning, afternoon and evening and not many meals went by without some camp craft awards being presented.

During the third period Perry was able to free himself up to lead an exploratory canoe trip down Thirty-one Mile Lake through to Lake Pensichangan via some other small lakes. This trip was highly successful and out of it have been developed a number of alternative routes for a variety of age and skill groups. The area lies south of Maniwaki and east of the Gatineau with easy access for drop-offs and pick-ups requiring no more, and often less, driving than some of our traditional trips.

In the aquatics department, both waterfronts were well run and supervised by Wendell White and Jane Bannerman with Wendell being the senior person. We were fortunate in having people running this area who are certified in life-saving and swim instruction at a national level and it showed up in their programs. Wendell ran two Bronze courses for C.I.T.s and staff which were well attended. A Royal Life Saving Society examiner was brought in to test the candidates and of those who took the courses all the C.I.T.s and most of the staff obtained their medallions.

On Jane's junior waterfront, many non-swimmers learned some swimming and many swimmers improved a great deal. The activity in the YMCA Card instruction program was heavy all summer with a large number of juniors attaining higher card levels.

Sailing was much bigger this year with the addition of four new two man "Arrows". The program, this year became a major one with a staff person, Dave Bennet, relating solely to sailing. Much credit for the growth in this activity must go to Eric Smart, of our Board of Management, who not only spent considerable time prior to camp getting the equipment ready but also spent two weeks of his vacation at camp organizing the program and training the staff.

The only major problem encountered was with the masts of the new boats which kept bending. The dealer informed us that this had been a problem with some of the original masts produced being badly tempered. He just replaced those which were bent and assured us that it should not happen with the new ones.

With the seven "Snarks", two "Cadets", four "Arrows" and a "Szabo" (donated by Eric Smart) we now have a sailing fleet of fourteen boats and there were days this summer when almost all were out on the lake.

In spite of the good weather this year the Arts and Crafts shop was a popular place with its director Jan Chartrand and a number of other creative people (including the very artistic Moez Shabudin) lending many skills to the program.

The Business Office was efficiently and pleasantly operated by Cathy Bannerman who at the same time did yeoman work co-ordinating the movements of the large numbers of C.I.T.s we had in camp this summer. Due to her efforts and the cooperation of the senior staff the new C.I.T. program was quite successful in its first year. Instead of being a separate section, they were integrated and trained on-the-job in all areas of camp. They generally seemed very happy with this set-up and they were much better accepted by the rest of the staff rather than being considered parasites who were only evident in the staff lounge and who consumed everything in sight at staff snack (summer of '72).

Very little needs to be said about maintenance as Julien Tasse and his crew did their usual tremendous job of keeping our ageing facilities in top shape. Considering the size of the property, the number of buildings, the amount of plumbing and the strain put on it, I can only congratulate Mr. Tasse for his good natured patience and cooperation with everyone's large and small requests during camp. How he ever manages to satisfy them all in addition to the regular work load and still keep smiling will always be a mystery to me.

One area we should look to improve next year is the food service. Whether it was the pressure of trying to keep costs down in the face of rising food prices or an attitude problem I'm not sure but the meals were not nearly as consistently good as in previous years with Industrial Caterers. The firm changed names this year having been bought out by J. A. Hubert and Sons and they may have occasioned a change in policies.

The chef's supervisor, Mr. Timmins, used to come up, in the past, at least once a week, this year, I only saw him twice in the first three periods and that was near the beginning. The chef was out of camp more often than he used to be, leaving his sub-ordinates in charge. I believe that had he been more closely supervised he might have seen to it that his staff did a better job but this may have been partly my fault for not complaining sooner. However, I was thinking all the time about the budget and when things had gone poorly for awhile they would suddenly improve, we would get a few good meals and forget about it until they began to slip again. The kitchen boys were hired by the chef, in Cowansville, but were on our payroll. This may have caused him and the firm to feel less responsible for their supervision thereby leaving us with a somewhat less efficient operation. The only bright light which should emerge, (I hope) in view of all this, will be possibly lower, or, at worse, no higher food service costs including wages than last year in spite of much increased provision prices.

Last but certainly not least, without the untiring help and constant communication from Mrs. Olga Hall, whose cheerful optimism and continued loyalty over the years, through four different Camp Directors, we would be hard pressed to make all ends meet.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- All '73 staff could be re-hired unconditionally with the following exceptions:

Brenda Tooby      )  
Pierre Parizeau ) Do not re-hire  
Pierre Audette    )

Al Mongraw does not work well without supervision and does not supervise people well himself. However, he does have good skills at repairing program equipment (canoes, etc.) and could be specifically given this responsibility and supervised. He tends to put his own needs and pleasure ahead of the camp's interests. Considers himself a power figure amongst the staff and is a great rationalizer.

Recommendations Cont'd

Rick Deterding has good skills but poor attitude when asked to do something he doesn't like such as being a counsellor for junior boys.

- Kitchen boys should be hired from Montreal Office and at the same time as other staff so they can participate in the same orientation program and therefore feel part of the staff with the same commitment to camp.
- Spell out more clearly the chef's responsibility in the contract with whichever catering firm is dealt with.
- Send at least two more people to the Canadian Canoe School.
- Have less C.I.T.s in camp.
- Get a doctor (or two for one month each) in the infirmary. With Medicare this is quite feasible at no cost to us.

Respectfully submitted,

Leo J. Robitaille

August 17, 1973